

# The Sacrament of Marriage

## Wedding Policies and Procedures

### Divine Mercy Parish

On behalf of Divine Mercy Parish, congratulations! If you are like most engaged couples, you may have discovered by now the joy, excitement, and anticipation that accompanies the announcement of your engagement. You may also have realized the excitement has given way to anxiety, worry and tension as you prepare for the most important event in your lives. Your wedding day is the day where you will gather with loved ones and publicly declare your decision to live out your lives together.

This public declaration is a sacrament and a symbol for all! Your marriage is a sign of the way God works among us. Your love reveals the greatness of God's love for both of you and for the entire world. You remind us, by your example, that God's love is permanent, faithful, gentle, forgiving, and creative.

Very often, the significance of the most important aspect of that one day, the wedding day, is lost among the details of dresses, tuxedos, flowers, and seating arrangements. How your wedding "looks" is not nearly as important as what actually happens there; the wedding liturgy itself.

You may have already heard that you, the couple, are the ministers of the sacrament, but the celebration does not belong to you alone. It belongs to the entire Church community as an expression of faith in a loving God. Your wedding day and your marriage are gifts that belong to and bless our Church.

This Church community, in one way or another, has been with each of you at the important turning points of your lives. Now, the community gathers again as you come to express your love for each other. It is your responsibility to make the celebration of your wedding liturgy reflect these important concepts to all present.

We at Divine Mercy Parish hope to help you create a day that is a meaningful expression of faith for the two of you as well as your loved ones, whom you have called together to witness your love for one another and God's love for all of us!

## The Wedding Liturgy

Many options are permitted in the Marriage Rite that enable the couple to make their wedding as personal as possible. For example, many choices are available regarding the various entrance rites, Scripture readings and prayers, and the exchange of vows. If both the bride and groom are Catholic, the celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage normally should occur during a Nuptial Mass. An interfaith wedding is typically celebrated with a marriage ceremony; however, a Nuptial Mass may also be celebrated. The celebrant for your wedding will gladly assist you with these arrangements. ***Please note: Your wedding ceremony is a reflection of your faith in the context of the Church. As a result, all communication regarding your wedding and all arrangements thereof must take place through you, the couple. Please do not have others contact the parish and/or clergy regarding your wedding. Additionally, it is your responsibility to make all arrangements and appointments with the officiating clergy.***

## Initial Arrangements

The initial arrangements for your wedding are made by calling the Parish Office (301.698.6767) at least six (6) months prior to your wedding date. At this time, you must schedule an appointment with a Parish priest. ***Your wedding date will not be confirmed until this initial meeting has taken place.*** It would be unwise to book a reception hall, etc., before the date has been set with a priest. The wedding and rehearsal times are limited only by the regularly scheduled parish liturgical celebrations and the availability of the priest or deacon presiding at your wedding. The date and time of your wedding can **ONLY** be confirmed by the priest or deacon who will be officiating at your wedding. If you have made arrangements for a priest or deacon from outside Divine Mercy Parish to officiate at your wedding, please discuss this with the Parish office in advance.

## Baptismal Certificate

A baptismal certificate is required of all Christian parties involved in a marriage. This certificate must be of recent issue (within six (6) months of your initial contact with Divine Mercy Parish). You may acquire this certificate by contacting the Church of your Baptism. The priest or deacon who will witness your marriage will further explain this to you.

## Marriage License

If you are to be married at St. Joseph Church, St. Peter Church, St. Gabriel Church, or St. Michael Church, you must obtain a marriage license from the Allegany County Clerk's Office in Cumberland (301.777.5922). If you are to be married at St. Ann Church, please obtain your license from the Marriage License Office in Garrett County (301.334.1937).

Your marriage license is valid for six months. Please be sure that the priest or deacon who will officiate your marriage has the license **no later than one week before the wedding ceremony. We cannot proceed with a wedding ceremony without the marriage license in hand.**

## Marriage Preparation

In view of the many stresses which affect marriage in today's society, the Catholic Church wants to assist engaged couples to think about and communicate more fully about areas of married life which may or may not have been discussed before. As you are aware, marriage is a sacrament in the Catholic Church. In our faith, all sacraments (with the exception of the Anointing of the Sick) require some form of preparation. Attendance at some form of marriage preparation program prior to the celebration of Marriage is the policy of the Archdiocese of Baltimore. The minimum period of preparation is six months; it is within the discretion of the priest preparing you for marriage to require a longer period for preparation. Options for Marriage Preparation include the following:

*Pre-Cana:* Pre-Cana classes are sessions scheduled together with a Leader Couple and a member of the clergy or religious to discuss various aspects of marriage.

*Engaged Encounter:* Engaged Encounter is a weekend retreat held in the Baltimore area. For more information, please contact the Division of Adult and Family Ministry for the Archdiocese of Baltimore: 410.547.5422.

When making your initial arrangements with Divine Mercy Parish, the clergy can help you to choose which Marriage Preparation best suits your needs.

## Location

A marriage usually takes place in the parish of the Bride, if both the Bride and Groom are of the Catholic Faith. When one party is not of the Catholic Faith, the parish of the Catholic party is the usual place for the ceremony. You are free to choose any priest assigned to Divine Mercy Parish. However, a priest or deacon who is a relative or close personal friend is always welcome to witness/officiate at your marriage. In either case, the priest assigned to our parish should be consulted first. When one party is not of the Catholic faith, a minister of his/her faith may be invited to be present in the sanctuary and to participate in the ceremony. Should there be a special reason to be married in a Church other than a Catholic Church, permission to do so may be requested of the Archbishop.

***Outdoor weddings, with permission from Divine Mercy Parish and the Archdiocese of Baltimore, may be permitted. Please see the policy on outdoor weddings that is enclosed in this packet.***

## Official Witnesses

The official witnesses at your wedding will be the Maid/Matron of Honor and the Best Man. They need not be Catholic.

## Lectors

Lectors (people who read the Scriptures) are to be chosen by the couple. There are usually two readings at your wedding liturgy that may be read by lectors. When choosing someone to proclaim a reading at your wedding liturgy, please choose someone who is comfortable with reading publicly.

# Details for Your Wedding

## Music

*Please see separate document regarding the music for your wedding ceremony.*

## Flowers

Flowers are to be provided at the expense of the bride and groom. Any flowers placed in the sanctuary are to be considered a gift to the Church. ***Please note: No rice, flower petals, birdseed, etc. are to be thrown anywhere inside or outside of the Church at any time, either by the flower girls or your wedding guests.***

## Guest Register

We recommend that your Guest Register be placed at the place of your reception. Placement of the register at the reception will ensure your wedding begins on time and that your guests will be ushered to their seats in a timely fashion.

## Photographs & Video

Photographs and videography are permitted during your ceremony. All photographers and videographers are to consult with the priest or deacon who is presiding at your wedding, and are asked to be discreet, respectful and presentable during the ceremony.

## Program

Many couples choose to put together a program for their wedding. This is not required; however, should you choose to use a program, you must submit the *final copy* to the officiating priest/deacon prior to having the program printed.

## Unity Candle

The unity candle is not a part of the Catholic Marriage Rite. During a Catholic wedding, unity is symbolized by the rings blessed during the ceremony.

## Fees

All fees for your wedding are **required two weeks prior** to the celebration of your wedding.

For all church locations in Divine Mercy Parish, fees are standardized as follows:

### **Church**

Parishioners (envelopes) \$525.00

Non Parishioners (non - envelope users) \$625.00

This fee will include the Church facility, wedding coordinator, the Organist, and the Cantor. A cantor and an organist is required for all weddings at Divine Mercy Parish.

**Dressing Areas** \$50.00 deposit

*\*Deposit is due at the time payment is rendered for all wedding services. Deposit will be refunded if dressing area is left clean and does not require service after the wedding.*

**Clergy Honorarium (optional)** \$100

(suggested offering; should be given at the time of the wedding to the officiating clergy)

*If there is financial hardship, please consult with the Parish priest. No one will ever be denied any of our services due to a lack of funds.*

